

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

The Economics of Primitive Life as
Illustrated from the Bantu Peoples
of South and East Africa

By

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INTRODUCTION

WITHOUT subscribing to any racial theories, we shall agree that there are great cultural differences between various sections of mankind. Nothing is more urgent than to achieve a clear comprehension of these differences, for only thus can we arrive at fundamental similarities. The principles of economics have been developed on the basis of Western life. Nothing is more important than to show whether they extend their validity to the more primitive cultures. This affords a testing-ground for economic theory which its exponents will doubtless welcome. It also should help in the enormous problem of making efficient contacts between ourselves and more primitive people in many distant parts of the world.

This book attempts something more. Co-operation between the various social sciences appears, to the author, to be a matter of extreme urgency. The day is past when this need can be met by each specialist doing a little light browsing in the works of his colleagues. It is very possible that progress is now to be made less through each specialist pursuing his own line of study, than by a consolidation and adjustment of work already done. Works on economics are full of problems upon which progress cannot be made until real working contact is established between economists and sociologists. Sociological studies require at every point, not merely advice from economists, though even this would always be useful, but active co-operation in every detail of the work.

Otherwise, we may see the spectacle of groups of students independently studying the same subject-matter—man in society—yet developing each his own terminology to such an extent that he can scarcely communicate scientifically with those who ought to be his fellow workers.

At the present stage of social science, the author is well

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

aware, it is difficult to enunciate economic principles in a way acceptable or even intelligible to many expert sociologists, social anthropologists and social psychologists. It is equally difficult to bring the principles and discoveries of these latter specialists into effective relationship with economic theory. It is scarcely to be hoped that this book will, in itself, establish such a relationship. But a beginning must be made.

The vital and penetrating interest shown by Professor Malinowski in his analysis of the economic life of a primitive people virtually made possible the writing of this book. His sustained and unstinting help have made possible its completion.

He, as no other scholar, has made it clear that human life can be studied only by giving equal, and equally expert, attention to every aspect of that life. It is the author's hope that he has been of some service in the elucidation of the economic aspect. Only thus can a real acknowledgment be made to the work of a great teacher and inspirer.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	xix-xx

PART I

CHAPTER I.—THE APPLICABILITY OF ECONOMIC THEORY TO SO-CALLED PRIMITIVE COMMUNITIES	3-17
--	------

Fitting economic formulae to the primitive. The practical importance of this. There can only be one body of economic theory. No gulf between the civilized and the primitive. The social anthropologist and the economist compare notes. Economics does not assume a Western exchange system. Some misconceptions. The absence of Western economic forms. Form and function in economics. The indirect satisfaction of wants. The economic application of resources. Its reality among the Bantu. The alleged carefree nature of the savage. Social mechanisms for economic disposal. The so-called dominance of custom. Choice at the margin of subsistence. Control by groups and by the individual. Values a cultural product. Economic disposal is part of any cultural scheme. The *minimum sensible*. Self-interest.

CHAPTER II.—ECONOMICS AND THE STUDY OF SOCIETY	18-49
--	-------

SECTION

I. <i>The Beginnings of Co-ordination</i>	18-23
---	-------

Co-ordinating economics and sociology. The uniformities of human culture. The basis of fact in the social world. Processes in social knowledge. The social world not truly external. Arriving at the constructs. Testing the constructs.

II. <i>The Grammar of Social Science</i>	23-32
--	-------

What is social fact? The existence or event. Active observation by the sociologist. The assumed facts of science. The hypothetical human needs. Their logical standing. Specialism and these needs. The fact of relationship. Relationships our main subject-matter. Describing the relationships of facts. Law in social science. Law as description. Frequency of associations. The invariable properties of social facts.

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

SECTION

PAGE

III. *Making the Assumptions* 32-37

The place of the economic aspect. Its significance for all relationships. Social fact in primitive communities. Some economic forms not to be found there. Economic assumptions in primitive communities. Assumptions different, but theory the same. Economics and sociology study the same subject-matter.

IV. *Economic Choice and Economic Value* 37-49

The physical needs. Their invariable social significance. The indirectness of productivity. The social fact of human behaviour. Its two-fold significance. Splitting it into units. The facts of the economist. The assumptions of the economist. The utility of logical method. How economics manipulates its objects of science. The main economic facts. How needs become economic wants. Choice as a type of behaviour. Its universality among the Bantu. Economic value among the Bantu. Comparison of values among the Bantu. The fact of limitation of resources. The invariability of wants and resources. The pressure of needs upon resources. Apparent exceptions. The wants expressed by social groups. The conversion of hypothetical needs into wants. The inevitability of this.

CHAPTER III.—THE THEORY OF PRIMITIVE ECONOMICS 50-58

Applying the basic concepts. The evaluation of units and resources. Fluctuations in these evaluations. The equivalent of price among the Bantu. Individuals invariably act in groups. No purely individual choice. Always the social aspect. The dual process in forming valuations. De Marco on the greater concreteness of Public Economics. Our assumption that the method of economics is equally applicable to individuals or to groups. All economic decisions as the outcome of group life. De Marco's two kinds of wants. Our rejection of individual wants. An examination of de Marco's collective wants. The weakness in this assumption. Knowing the individual's wants. We can know them only if they are expressed in action. How far does the individual make evaluations? Where the economist must consult the sociologist. The importance of social reciprocity as a concept. The significance of this for collective wants. When the individual valuation disagrees with that of the group. Social mechanisms to deal with such cases. Pressure to accept the valuations of the group. We assume all wants to be collective. We do not accept de Marco's full use of this term. Economic theory on the assumption of groups as subject. Extending from the assumption of the individual subject. Public economics can use theory to the same extent as general economics.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER IV.—OWNERSHIP AND THE ECONOMIC SUBJECT	59-71
--	-------

SECTION

I. <i>Ownership and Disposal</i>	59-64
--	-------

How the Bantu groups exercise ownership. Types of economic goods. Social organization as a primary instrument in economic management. Making the secondary environment. Economic management impossible without thoroughly defined ownership. The conditioning factors, knowledge and felt pressure of wants. These determine the extent to which latent resources are turned into commodities. Control of individuals in such matters. Growth of property out of these functions. Complex functions of all goods. Control of consumption. How this also controls the maintenance of capital. How the economic subject controls the disposal of grain. How food becomes capital. The balance between present and future satisfactions.

II. <i>Groups and Economic Management</i>	65-71
---	-------

However resources used, economic choice involved. Grain technically one commodity, but economically not so. Choices as to how it is to be used. Never a purely individual want satisfied. Yet all wants registered by individuals. Decisions in any community made by groups. Physical production and production of satisfactions. Economic principle functions in both. Bantu lack sharp distinction between important production and consumption goods. Further, complex wants satisfied by simple commodity. Modern Economic Theory fits this well. Argument illustrated by reference to cattle. How mechanisms of Bantu culture regulated provision of capital. Simple desire to save always present. Bantu economy not characterized by directness. Its main feature is lack of technical knowledge. Choice as to the amount of labour to be applied to the soil. Individual and group evaluations in this. The stability of wants. Competing demands on time and energy.

CHAPTER V.—EQUILIBRIUM ECONOMICS AND THE PRIMITIVE	72-84
--	-------

SECTION

I. <i>Consumption Activities</i>	72-74
--	-------

Evaluations placed upon consumption activities. How these activities compete with agriculture. The organized activities which control consumption. Mistaken view that agriculture might be improved if these were reduced. As important to describe organization of wants as of physical production. By reducing wants, production might also be reduced.

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

SECTION	PAGE
II. <i>Collective Wants</i>	74-75
<p>Decision as to how much labour to be applied to agriculture made by group as economic unit. Personal preferences must be taken to coincide. Organization of wants further ensures this. Reciprocal relation between productive activities and organized wants.</p>	
III. <i>The Economics of Land</i>	75-78
<p>Economic ownership in land. Relationship between its economic and other social aspects. Best mixing of land and labour a fundamental problem to the Bantu. No real superfluity of land. Actual sale among one tribe. But limited among all. The real cost of cultivable land. Competition for suitable fields. Deciding what area to break in. Much foresight needed. Economic leadership of headman. Consequences of inefficient choice. Land frequently changes hands, though not by sale. Difficulty of distinguishing amount of resources expended upon land. But indications given. Heavy labour cost of obtaining fields. Lack of money must not prevent our seeing a real price of land.</p>	
IV. <i>The Agents of Production</i>	78-80
<p>How the agents of production are mixed in accordance with the valuations placed upon them by members of the groups. We cannot say that a fund of capital is released to be turned into productive equipment. Therefore no choice as to how this is to be used. Also no entrepreneurial function in this sense. Surplus of consumption goods, but used to maintain only the human frame. Bantu society is virtually non-progressive. However, always some slight choice in application of productive resources. Difference in degree, rather than in kind, from Western communities, but very significant.</p>	
V. <i>Management and the Entrepreneur</i>	80-82
<p>No burning question as to what new capital goods shall be created. Function of money does not extend to this evaluation. But does extend to goods of lower order. Lack of money correlated with lack of lengthy economic processes. <i>Minimum sensible</i> very effective in consumption goods. Practically no interest as a distributive share. Consumption interest does exist. Entrepreneurial interest better assumed to be non-existent. Headman as entrepreneur, but not with control of resources of highest order. His importance as economic manager.</p>	

CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
<p>VI. <i>The Attribution of Economic Shares</i></p> <p>Two important differences in degree between Bantu and Western society. More fundamental fact of economic attribution does exist. Agencies of production various and substitutable. Variations in returns. Problem of sharing work and its proceeds. Realization of contribution of factors. Formation of market "prices", essential to attribution, does extend to units of labour. Extreme value of Bantu labour in production. Difficult to disentangle rewards to labour. Proceeds go to group. Organizations of consumption then secures sharing out. But not on basis of shares to individuals. Valuing the labour of a group. The marginal valuation. Economic use of labour fully secured without strict sharing of proceeds to individual labourers.</p>	82-84
<p>CHAPTER VI.—FURTHER APPLICATIONS OF ECONOMIC THEORY</p>	
85-95	
SECTION	
<p>I. <i>The Essentials of Ownership</i></p> <p>Economic aspects of ownership. To what extent the economist can take ownership for granted. The essentials of group ownership. Full play for individual preferences. Ownership of consumption goods. Mistake to say that this must always be individual. No purely individual needs, and no purely individual ownership. Social relations of consumption. Ownership of productive goods. Similar to that in Western communities. How the consumers set the pace of production.</p>	85-89
<p>II. <i>Conveyed Ownership</i></p> <p>Conveyed ownership. Placing factors of production in hands of headman. Definite valuations upon these factors. The reward of economic management. Difficult to think of Bantu manager dissatisfied with his reward. Difficult for him to withhold his services. Why we must question individual ownership of consumption goods. Bantu social unit considered as a market. Extent of freedom of choice. Valuations must and do change.</p>	90-92
<p>III. <i>Custom and Economic Choice</i></p> <p>Customary disposal of resources, far from being non-economic, implements economic management. Society as an economic mechanism. Illusion of fixed disposal. Number of parties sharing in each exchange. Large enough to secure effective substitution. Even rules of kinship contribute to, rather than hamper this. Most efficient entrepreneur is secured. Optimum size of unit approached. Conclusion.</p>	92-95

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

PART II

	PAGE
CHAPTER VII.—THE ECONOMICS OF PREGNANCY AND BIRTH	99-112

Productive activities and human needs. Choice and its limitations. The emergence of the need. Devoting resources to pregnancy and birth. The primary need. The child as an economic asset. The relative values of the sexes. Choosing between the herd and the family. The cost of barrenness. How it is shared. The expenses of the birth. How they are kept within limits. The special cost of the first pregnancy. Economic status of the childless woman. Payment for the first child. Midwives and their payment. Their primary and secondary duties. The economic significance of legitimacy. Midwives as diviners. The cost of doctors. Interruptions of the mother's work. How values emerge.

CHAPTER VIII.—ECONOMICS OF THE INITIATION CEREMONIES	113-125
--	---------

Organized activities and economic disposal. The fundamental dualism. The non-economic significance of initiation. No primary need is concerned. The educational function. The economic aspect hitherto neglected. The direct cost of the ceremonies. The nature of the wealth involved. The special herd of cows. Strain upon the milk supply. The cost of beer drinks. Heavy work involved. Economic planning by the man and his wives. The ceremonies conditioned by economic supplies. The new economic status of the initiates. Fitting the ceremonies into the economic year. And into seasons of plenty. The new human assets of the tribe. Economic leadership of the chief. Fees of initiates. Controlling economic resources to meet the ceremonies.

CHAPTER IX.—ECONOMICS OF MARRIAGE	126-139
---	---------

Economic motives in the young. Preparing for great occasions. Natural and human fertility. Economic resources changing hands at marriage. Exchanging as a valued activity. Bride-price as one of a series of gifts. The Bantus' own explanation of its economic significance. The real significance. Reinforcing economic disposal. Measuring economic resources. The roots of value. Marriage of supreme economic significance. Economic progress of the boy. And of the girl. The territorial circle of exchange. The interdependence of districts. Occasions for the settling of debts. Series of needs satisfied by bride-price. Further payments.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER X.—THE ECONOMICS OF SOCIAL UNITS	140-167

SECTION

I. *The Family as an Economic Unit* 140-147

The polygynous family as the basic unit. The units which make decisions. The family in Bantu and European economics. The Bantu family group. The economic significance of its being patrilocal. The maintenance of economic relationships. The true nature of polygyny. Polygyny as an ideal. Economically, not merely a series of monogamous marriages. The responsibilities of the sexes. Key position of the husband. Disposing of the grain. Economic functions of the family.

II. *The Homestead* 147-151

General lack of specific economic organizations. How the social groupings function. One family seldom lives by itself. The size of the homesteads. The optimum size. The buildings. The shape of the homestead. The cattle kraal as the centre. Choosing a new site. The manifold functions of the cattle kraal. The grain pits. Their control. The houses within the homestead. Their significance. The homestead as an ideal. Practical aspects of this ideal.

III. *The Homestead at Work* 151-160

Duties of the wife. Her private resources and the sharing of food. Herding by men and boys. Variations in the daily routine. Activities of the men. The circulation of economic resources among homesteads. Connections of one homestead with others. When the wife invests in a working-party. Organizing the labour power of a district. The economics of milking. Detailed ownership in cattle. The apportionment of cows to the houses. Inequalities between wives. Ownership and storing of tubers. The main grain stores. Emphasis on the husband's control. The wife's share in the disposal of grain. Importance of the evening meal. The family as an economic unit within the household.

IV. *The Homestead and Its Neighbourhood*. 160-167

No homestead is isolated. The locality as an economic unit. Economic leadership in a locality. Enlarging choice. Mutual support of homesteads. Dependence of small homesteads upon larger. The leasing out of cattle from larger homesteads. Services contingent upon this. New homesteads set up by brothers. Still economic co-operation. The forms taken by this. Still some central economic control. Economic consultation between the homesteads. Mechanisms for achieving the optimum unit. The clan in economic life.

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

	PAGE
CHAPTER XI.—A SURVEY OF ECONOMIC UNITS	168-209

SECTION

I. <i>The Transkei Peoples</i>	168-180
--	---------

The chief's homestead. Selecting a new homestead site. Amount of work required. The man as economic leader. The importance of the grain pits. The commercial aspect of marriage. An old man's investment in a new wife. The economic status of the new wife. The importance of publicity and the feast. Economic powers of women. Marriage and the supply of food. Sharing of economic responsibility between husband and wives. The wives other than the first wife. The senior wife and the investment in subsequent wives. The working power of the new wife. This increases resources of the older women. Releases resources for work-parties. Cattle apportioned to the new wife. The long-distance return to the investment in the new wife. Apportionment of newly acquired cattle. Ultimate responsibility with the husband. When a man fails to apportion cattle. Or tries to keep them to himself. Moral aspects of father's economic leadership.

II. <i>The Bomvana</i>	180-185
----------------------------------	---------

Villages, Homesteads, and Houses. Grouping the houses of a wealthy man. Declining size of homesteads. Rank in regard to houses and wives. No fundamental economic distinction between great and minor wives. Economic co-operation between homesteads. Fieldwork and cattle management. Responsibilities among relatives. Importance of the wife's brother.

III. <i>The Pondo</i>	185-193
---------------------------------	---------

The co-operation of the wives. The apprenticeship of the young wife. Setting her up with food. Building her house. Her life during apprenticeship. Ending the apprenticeship. Defining her new responsibilities. Co-operation of man and wife in managing food. Determining the best size for the homestead. How the size is changed. Rare for rich man to set up extra homestead. Common for members of homestead to branch off. Economic consultation between father and son. Even after son has his new homestead. Father's responsibility for unmarried son. Religious sanctions for this. Economic significance of father's brothers. Economic relation of father and daughter. How these continue after her marriage.

CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
IV. <i>The Zulus</i>	193-197

Economics of the household. Houses of principal wives as special economic units. Economic value of children's labour. Economic co-operation of the sexes. Social sanctions for this. Economic value of husband's responsibility for law and order. Co-operation between homesteads united by marriage.

V. <i>The Thonga</i>	197-204
--------------------------------	---------

Bride-price as personal capital. Economic preparation for marriage. The new wife a servant during her first year. The value of daughters' work. Women's devotion to the fields. Economic significance of the marital relationship. Polygamy as an ideal. Economic leadership of the great wife. Organizing the work of the wives. The economics of polygamy. The economics of witchcraft. Reasons for changing the size of the homestead. Supernatural and practical reasons. Economic significance of emotional attachment to the homestead. The father as economic leader. Right to set up a new homestead. The labour involved in this. Direct payment as well as reciprocity. The fields as the women's special sphere.

VI. <i>The Ubena</i>	204-209
--------------------------------	---------

Disposing of the rice stores. Planning for next season. Sharing garden lands among wives. Financing work-parties. Sharing control over economic resources of house. Woman's income from her labour. Man's income from his property. Management of joint resources. The sharing of food. Inequalities as between wives. Economic advantages of polygynous household. Summary, the homestead as the main economic unit but not an economic institution. No specific economic institutions. Complete economic cycle within the Bantu homestead.

CHAPTER XII.—TILLING THE SOIL	210-252
---	---------

SECTION

I. <i>Food and Knowledge</i>	210-216
--	---------

Balance between agriculture and herding. Technique of agriculture. Similarities throughout Bantu Africa. The agricultural cycle. Clearing land, the first economic decision. Knowledge as capital equipment. To be deduced from the activities. A colonist quoted. No specialization as yet.

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

SECTION	PAGE
II. <i>Land for Cultivation</i>	217-221

Economy in clearing. No garden fixed. Determining the area to be cleared. Real cost of agricultural soil. Land is seldom a free good. Always limitations of some kind. And preferences. Demand as the controlling factor. Labour power as the main equipment. Use of food as a capital resource. Households adequately or inadequately supplied with capital. Planting and weeding. The economics of protection against pests.

III. <i>The Economics of Agricultural Organization</i>	221-226
--	---------

Forces regulating the work. Investment in rain specialists. The effective economic decisions. By whom made. Magic, religion, and the chief. Large economic units concerned with rain-making. Capital outlay by the tribe. The missionary and the rain-maker. The rational element in rain-making.

IV. <i>The Gardens of the Chief</i>	226-229
---	---------

Twofold significance. Means of taxation. Also economic leadership of chief. Pace set by the chief's gardens. These cultivated on ordinary household lines. But difference in the remuneration. Where chieftainship is relatively weak. The army and the chief's gardens.

V. <i>The Greater Economic Units</i>	229-233
--	---------

All economic decisions not left to the household. The economics of the tribe. Controlling the land allotted to each homestead. How the chief led his people to good land. Arable land may anywhere have economic value. One tribe in which it became saleable. The opportunity cost of land. Choice definitely limited. Conditions of acquiring land in one tribe. Expressing differential values in land.

VI. <i>The Economics of Agriculture</i>	233-235
---	---------

Variations in industry between individuals. Family cultivation. Man's share in work and in economic responsibility. Regulation by rains.

CONTENTS

SECTION

PAGE

VII. *The Economic Application of Resources* 235-246

A people with a permanent crop. Cultivation in Northern Rhodesia. Great expenditure of labour. Merits of native methods. Impossible to estimate amount of work. The balance of work and income. Ability to make adjustments. Complete dependence of African on the soil. Agricultural technique and social organization. Emotional aspects of agriculture. Field magic in a South African tribe. Spasmodic work preferred. The economics of work-parties. Their apparent waste of effort. The motive in accumulating grain. Remuneration of helpers. Attracting labour. Possible only to large households. Chief means of employing labour. Comparative value of means of payment throughout the year. How they fit into tribal economics. Complexity of payment. Putting grain stores and labour power into the market. Applying labour and capital to the soil. Sharing the proceeds.

VIII. *Economic Conclusions* 247-252

The combining of agencies of production. Imputing shares. Not formulated, but real. Done within the household. The wife's economic share. Her ability to bargain. The man's share in return for his management. Formulating his share. Imputation and distribution within the kinship unit. Even differences between Bantu and Western systems emphasize their real similarity. People's awareness of their economic choice. Aware of comparative values of garden sites. Valuing supplies of grain. The basic choice as to the application of labour. Valued activities which may have to be surrendered. Superior disposal of resources in larger households. Reality of economic choice within the usual customary limits. Obvious lack of capital on Western scale. Knowledge as a determinant in the accumulation of capital. Knowledge and the determination of value. Storing limited by the means of storing. Also by the future demand for stored products. Motives for and reality of saving. This determined by the people's choice within the limits of their culture. Impossible to speak of Bantu production as "direct". The reality of demand as the controlling factor. But demand expressible only in terms of the culture. Demand itself formed by organized activity. The definition of "enough". The economic aspect of the round of activities. The variety of ways in which produce can be expended. How the awareness of this relates to the cycle of production and consumption. No single aspect of culture can alone be changed from outside. The problem of new methods. May conflict with indigenous knowledge. The necessity for maintaining social obligations. Agriculture as a complete system of activities, with the economic as one of its aspects.

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

PART III

	PAGE
CHAPTER XIII.—THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ECONOMIC UNITS	255-269
<p>Public economics and Economic theory. The individual as economic unit. De Marco on the two fields of investigation. His two assumptions. Individual and collective wants. Really only one kind. Primary and derived wants. Individuals and the group. How economic decisions are made. No economic difference between State and Family.</p>	
CHAPTER XIV.—THE TWO ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES	270-286
<p>Interpersonal comparisons. Disposal of resources within the groups. The unit and the persons. The proof or knowledge of interpersonal comparisons. Social anthropology and these comparisons. Judgments about other people's satisfactions. Wicksteed on the problem. His two stages in economic disposal. De Marco and Wicksteed.</p>	
INDEX	287

PART I